

THE GARRISON OF NEWPORT PAGNELL DURING THE CIVIL WARS.

BY REV. H. ROUNDELL.

At the close of the summer of 1643 large bodies of the Royal forces were posted at Towcester and Grafton Regis in Northamptonshire, and at Stony Stratford in Buckinghamshire. These detachments formed the main strength of Prince Rupert's army, in his rapid and successful expedition into Bedfordshire during the first week in October, and were afterwards returned to their respective quarters. At the same time it was determined to advance still further the King's cause in the north-eastern division of the county of Bucks by the permanent occupation of Newport Pagnell as a winter garrison for a portion of the King's army, who in that position would less exhaust the neighbourhood of Oxford, keep open a communication from Reading to the northern parts of the kingdom, and impede the passage of the enemy between London and the Associated Counties. This service was entrusted to Sir Lewis Dives, a man of tried fidelity, but of no great ability as a soldier, and he reached Newport with a small force on the 6th of October, and immediately commenced to fortify the town with defensive works.

He designed to environ the town upon those sides that were undefended by the river, with a ditch and high embankment, afterwards to be surmounted by artillery so placed as to command the bridges over the Ouze and the roads leading to the town. These defences he was not destined to complete. Intelligence of the occupation of Newport speedily reached the Earl of Essex, and he, knowing that he should more easily reduce the place, if the attack were made before the works were finished, or reinforcements added to the garrison, pushed forward Major-General Skippon with a large force, himself following with the rest of his army. Whether the unfinished fortifications were indefensible, or, as Lord Clarendon states, a mistake of orders occurred, Dives retired

at the approach of Skippon, who lost not a day in occupying the town and fortifications thus easily abandoned. But Skippon's position was far from safe. The possession of Newport was important enough to both parties to be worth a struggle. And though Sir Lewis Dives had hastily withdrawn his men to Oxford, Prince Rupert was still at Stony Stratford, and a combined movement on his part with the forces at Towcester and Grafton might have made it difficult for Skippon to retain the Town.

Well aware of this danger, Major-General Skippon ordered a strong detachment to occupy Olney, and prepared a simultaneous attack upon the Royalists at three points. On the evening of the 1st of November he sent out of Newport considerable forces of horse and foot, divided into three detachments, one consisting of the horse from Northampton, another of the London Green and Orange Regiments, which had been sent down for the defence of the town, and the last formed of three regiments of horse, commanded respectively by Colonels Middleton, Harvey, and Turner, Harvey holding the chief command. The first detachment attacked the Earl of Northampton's troops at a place called Stowes in Northamptonshire, falling upon them about day-break, and took fourteen prisoners without loss to themselves. The London soldiers about the same time in the morning surprised an outpost of the Towcester garrison, encamped at Alderton, near Easton, also in Northamptonshire, and utterly routed it, killing fifteen, and making twenty-two prisoners. The regiments of horse under Colonel Harvey proceeded to Stony Stratford, where Prince Rupert remained quartered, and attacking during the night time, slew the sentinels, and entered the town, where they inflicted some further loss, and returned with eighteen prisoners, and only two of their own men wounded. Such was the success of these expeditions, that the correspondent of one of the Parliamentary Journals, after describing the skirmishes, adds—"So many horses were brought in, that a horse Fayre was held at Newport that day, and horses sold good cheape for ready money."

These successes were, however, soon compensated in another engagement. Prince Rupert smarting under the disgrace of being surprised in his own quarters, collected his men, and on Saturday, the fourth of November, three

days after the defeat at Stony Stratford, marched to Olney, where his successful adversary, Colonel Harvey, was then quartering, by Skippon's orders, with his three regiments of cavalry and a large force of infantry. Rupert appeared before the town at seven o'clock in the morning with several troops of horse, four hundred dragoons, and two hundred musqueteers, carried on horseback behind the cavalry. The watch was badly kept, and within a quarter of an hour after the sentinels had given the first alarm, and by the time that Colonel Harvey had drawn out one Regiment of horse, Rupert was within musket-shot of the town. Charging at once with his usual impetuosity, he carried all before him, and nearly captured the whole detachment. But at the opposite end of the town stood a long causeway, leading across the river, undoubtedly the same that Cowper afterwards described as

Yonder bridge
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the winter flood.

And here the fugitives were soon crowded together in great confusion. Colonel Harvey and some other officers contrived to rally a few of their men, and occupying a narrow part of the causeway, made a momentary stand against their pursuers. But Rupert's musqueteers quickly came up, when the retreating force after firing two hasty volleys, abandoned their position and retired beyond the bridge. Their panic was the means of their escape—Rupert's soldiers, surprised at the haste with which the enemy had quitted the town, and the equally rapid abandonment of their strong position on the bridge, became apprehensive lest a retreat so unexpected formed part of a preconcerted plan to entrap them into an ambuscade beyond the causeway, and accordingly halted in their pursuit till assured that none of the enemy's troops were concealed in the town behind them. Their delay afforded time for the flying soldiers to reform their ranks in some order, and to retire beyond pursuit. Colonel Harvey lost sixty killed and forty prisoners, besides one hundred and twenty horses, and two stand of colours, and one of his writers congratulates himself that the loss was not greater, remarking of Prince Rupert's soldiers, "There was much mercy in it, that they were stopped before they came

“ to the bridge, for had they bin Mrs. of it they had
 “ divided us from our army at Newport, as they did a
 “ troope of our regiment that lay in a village could
 “ not come at us, but were constrained to get to North-
 “ ampton.” And although Lord Essex shortly afterwards
 published Colonel Harvey’s dispatch written after the de-
 feat, with a view of showing that the engagement termi-
 nated without much advantage to either side, and that the
 troops under his command were able to re-occupy Olney
 the same day, there can be no question that the substantial
 fruits of victory remained with Rupert, and might be
 fairly balanced against the losses of Stowes, Alderton, and
 Stony Stratford.

The most positive result of this victory is to be found
 in the fact, that although Rupert speedily marched away
 his troops from the neighbourhood, Skippon attempted no
 further attack upon the enemy beyond sending out a
 strong body to reconnoitre the garrison of Towcester till
 he had made safe the defensive works at Newport. He
 had with him during this and the following month the
 greater part of Lord Essex’s army, placed there in their
 winter quarters, and the Green and Orange Regiments
 of the City of London, who had distinguished themselves
 at Newbury. Newport was soon “ strongly fortified with
 motes and drawbridges;” Colonel Tirell was placed in
 chief command over the garrison, and it was intended to
 leave him as Governor, with a force of 2000 men, a strength
 sufficient, it was calculated, to hold the town against any
 attack or siege.

The settlement of a permanent garrison at Newport was
 mainly due to the foresight and exertions of Lord Essex.
 In November the Earl visited Newport, and personally
 inspected the fortifications then in progress. And as soon
 as the works were reported to be sufficiently advanced for
 safety, the Earl wrote from St. Alban’s to the Speaker of
 the House of Commons, strongly advising the continued
 occupation of Newport, and urging in the main the same
 arguments which had previously influenced the King to
 send thither Sir Lewis Dives with a similar intention. In
 reply the Speaker directed that the proposal should be
 considered at St. Alban’s at a Conference of the Com-
 mittees of Bucks, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cam-
 bridgeshire, Huntingdon and Suffolk, under the Presi-

dency of the Earl. The Council met, but discussed the project without warmth, fearing doubtless the expense of the future maintenance of the garrison: and it may be reasonably presumed that the Committee of Bucks, represented by Sir Peter Temple, Sir William Andrews, and Mr. Edmond West, were secret if not open opponents of the measure, as they were then busy in providing for the defence of Aylesbury, and their subsequent conduct towards the Governor of Newport, as indeed that of all the Associations, proved no desire on their parts for the continuance or welfare of the garrison. Even from the first day of their meeting it was plain to Lord Essex that nothing would be readily done in the Newport business, for which they were specially convened; and as vexatious delays were interposed at every step, they were at length brought to obedience by a peremptory order from the Speaker, requiring them "to attend the Lord General until the Newport garrison was settled."

Pending these conferences at St Alban's, the House of Commons had appointed its own Committee to deliberate on the fortification of Newport Pagnell, and to meet a Committee of the Lords. All agreed to recommend the proposed security of the town, and the Committee of the Commons reported to the House under date of the 8th of November that, "the Lords had agreed to their proposal to send the Hertfordshire Regiment from Luton to Newport, and that the Recorder of the City of London gave leave to the Green and Orange Regiments to remain at Newport a little longer."

Upon the acceptance of this Report the House of Commons proceeded to draw up an Ordinance for the future garrison of Newport. Further Committees were appointed, and conferences held between the two Houses, and many minor points examined with a care which does credit to the Members who conducted the proceedings. On the 30th of November the Draft of the Ordinance was presented to the Commons, taken into consideration within a few days after, and on Saturday, 16th of December, a Committee of the House of Lords, consisting of the Earl of Northumberland, Lords Pembroke, Warwick, Sarum, Bolinbroke, Say and Sele, Wharton, and Howard, met a Deputation of the House of Commons at three o'clock

in the afternoon in the Painted Chamber, to arrange finally the terms of the Newport garrison. The Ordinance as then settled, passed both Houses without alteration, and was ordered to be printed by the House of Lords on 18th December, 1643. It is somewhat voluminous, and may be found at length among the King's Pamphlets in the British Museum, and a full abstract of it in the Journals of the House of Lords, Vol. vi. p. 344. Its terms are in substance these—

“ That the town of Newport Pannell in Bucks shall be strongly fortified and provisioned, and the sum of one thousand pounds expended for this purpose, to be raised from the Counties following :—

Bedford	£187 : 10.	Cambridge cum Ely. . .	£80.
Hertford ..	£125.	Suffolke	£125.
Northampton	£125.	Essex	£125.
Huntingdon .	£45.*	Norfolk	£125.
The Three Hundreds of Newport..		£62 10.	

“ And that if the cost of the fortifications shall exceed one thousand pounds the additional sum required shall be raised rateably from the above-named Counties and Hundreds.

“ And for the maintenance of the works and garrison, and a body of three hundred horse and their officers, a monthly allowance of four thousand pounds, commencing from the first day of December, 1643, shall be raised as follows:—

Bedford	£750.	Suffolke.....	£500.
Hertford	£500.	Essex.....	£500.
Northampton.....	£500.	Norfolke	£500.
Huntingdon	£180.	The Three Hun-	} £250.
Cambridge cum Ely.	£320.	dreds of Newport }	

“ And for providing a garrison it was ordered that within fourteen days after the passing of the Ordinance, the undermentioned Counties should send in soldiers :— Bedford 225 foot ; Hertford 125 ; Northampton 150 ; Huntingdon 45 ; Cambridge cum Ely 105 ; Suffolke 150 ; Essex 150 ; Norfolke 150 ; and the Three Hundreds of

* The Counties of Huntingdon, Essex, and Cambridge appear to have been assessed to the fortification and maintenance of Newport on the recommendation of the Earl of Essex.

Newport 75; a force amounting to nearly 1200 men, to be placed under the command of a Governor, to be nominated by the Earl of Essex. The Ordinance gave authority to the Committees of the several contributory Counties to levy rates upon their towns and villages, to issue warrants against defaulters, and to appoint a Treasurer, with a salary of five shillings a day to receive and pay the sums allotted for the garrison, and directed each Committee to send forthwith a representative to Newport to assist the Governor. And besides this ample provision for the completion of the fortifications and the maintenance of the troops, the Ordinance proceeded further to lay down rules for the conduct of the garrison; the resident Committee was ordered to muster the soldiers, horse and foot, every fourteen days, and then give them their pay; the field officers and captains were made responsible for the full complement of men under their command, and if 'they failed a fifth part of their companies, they should forfeit a fifth part of their pay; if a fourth part, then a fourth, and so in proportion.'

"In the event of attack, or during siege, power was given to the Governor to put on duty all able-bodied men within the town; to compel the richer persons according to their means to provide the poorer with arms, under penalty of being put out of the garrison; and also to appoint a Mayor, with a salary of nine shillings a day, to receive and give orders and command the townsmen."

Of the two houses of Parliament that of the Lords appears to have been most solicitous for the safety of Newport. In agreeing to a vote of the Commons, ordering the Earl of Essex to march towards Windsor, the Lords inserted this clause—"So soon as forces shall be put into Newport Pannel for the safety thereof, whereby he may draw up his own forces to himself to march;" and in compliance with this injunction 500 men were sent to Newport by the Earl of Manchester. The Committee at Hertford proving dilatory in the execution of their part of the Ordinance, received fresh orders to proceed with their contribution of men and money, and that they might have no excuse for further delay, they were empowered and directed to take into custody all persons refusing to go to Newport. Thus secure of the countenance of the

Parliament, Skippon continued the fortifications, and as the time for the departure of Lord Essex's army from Newport drew near, he signaled the resignation of his command by a piece of good service to the Parliamentary cause.

On Thursday night, December the twenty-first, Skippon issued orders for the muster of a thousand foot with four pieces of artillery at Lathbury by two o'clock on the following morning. This force was there joined by a troop of horse of their own garrison, and another under Colonel Norwich; and the whole army under the command of the Major-General himself was immediately disposed in marching order, part of the horse advancing in the van, the infantry in the centre, and the rest of the Newport horse covering the rear. In this order they marched towards Grafton Regis, six miles distant northward from Newport, but on reaching it, made a detour leaving Grafton House to the right, and approached to within a mile of Towcester, which had been strongly fortified the preceding month under Rupert's own eye, and was then garrisoned by the King's troops. Here they were strengthened by the arrival of Colonel Whetham, Governor of Northampton, with large reinforcements of horse and foot. A halt ensued, and it then appeared either that the march towards Towcester was a mere feint to disguise Skippon's real intentions, or that Towcester was too strongly guarded to give the attacking force a chance of success; at any rate, a counter-march was immediately ordered, and the army retraced its steps towards Grafton.

Grafton House, situated on the brow of the hill above the village, and then held by Sir John Digby for the King, not only deserved its appellation of Regis, as a Royal demesne, but from its historical associations. Within its walls, on May-day, 1464, Edward the Fourth had been privately married to Elizabeth Woodville. King Richard the Third had halted his army in its neighbourhood in his march northwards, and himself occupied the mansion on the 19th of October 1493. At Grafton on the 4th of August 1529, the final interview between Henry VIII. and Cardinal Campeggio had taken place, the particulars of which are fully detailed by Cavendish, the friend and biographer of Wolsey; and Queen Elizabeth had slept there on the night of the 23rd of August, in

her Royal Progress of 1568. The house itself, an old and strongly built mansion, with thick stone walls, had been further strengthened for the purposes of defence by a substantial breast-work on the roof. Sir John Digby's force consisted of about one hundred musqueteers with their officers, and eighty troopers—rather less than an average garrison of the fortified houses of the Civil Wars. In such houses the musqueteers were usually employed for the defence of the place against attack, and the troopers to bring in supplies, intercept convoys of ammunition or provisions, and watch their opportunities of inflicting injuries on the enemy. It was generally considered that, except in case of surprise, these small garrisons ought to hold out for two or three days against an attacking force, and that within that space relief would reach them from some neighbouring friendly garrison, or their own army. In this expectation Sir John Digby disposed his men to await the enemy's attack, now inevitable.

The counter-march of Skippon's army, as ordered at Towcester, had entirely reversed the positions of his men. The Newport horse which had been in the rear, were now in front; and the Green and Orange, or London Regiments, next behind them; and the troops from Northampton, under Colonel Whetham, brought up the rear. In this order they marched upon Grafton; but when within sight of the house the older soldiers of Lord Essex's army, advancing forwards with great rapidity, passed before the London Regiments, and commenced the attack. They were soon beaten back with some loss. Two guns were then planted against the house, but produced little impression. All Friday was passed in fruitless assaults, the besieged continuing to fire with good aim and effect from behind the breast-work, and from a large window of the house, and Skippon, finding that the garrison would not yield to a sudden attack, ordered huts to be built for his soldiers, with a view to the complete investment of the place. On Saturday morning the siege operations were committed to the Green and Orange Regiments, and re-commenced with vigour. The besiegers found means to place a small gun called a saker advantageously to bear upon the breast-work, and, notwithstanding the loss of one of the gunners shot from the house, and the explosion of their magazine, by which nine men

were wounded, had beaten it down by repeated discharges before the evening. The garrison still held out, awaiting relief, and the next day, Sunday, the Green and Orange Regiments were in their turn relieved by the Northampton forces. Two hours passed, and the fortifications were fast giving way, when Sir John Digby ordered a drummer to the top of the house to sound a parley, but through the eagerness of the besiegers the poor man was shot at, and wounded, but not killed. Sir John then sent out the following proposal for surrender:—

Sir,—As we are determined to carry our selves like gentlemen, and men of honour; so if you will please to consent to conditions fit for such, we shall surrender this place unto you.

The conditions we desire are these

1. That we may march forth with our Armes, Horses, and Baggage, and as well those that have not borne Armes as those that have, may march forth to *Oxford*, in the aforesaid manner, without any violence to be offered, till they arrive at *Oxford*, and have a safe conduct to *Banbury*.

2. That both the Souldiers, and the people of the house, may have two dayes liberty after the surrender of the place to carry away their goods, and the Carts of the Country allowed them in, and the Souldiers may have six houres liberty and the house to remove Bag and Baggage, if you consent that this be made good by those that are here.

JOHN DIGBY.

These terms Major-General Skippon at once refused to grant, and replied to Sir John requiring him immediately—

1. To surrender all your persons, Prisoners, and all Arms, Horses, Standards, Colours, and all Provisions of Warre whatsoever withall that is within the house.

2. That you deliver all those Souldiers of ours, which have been taken prisoners by you, and that if any of our Souldiers, Prisoners, taken by you have suffered in any sort by you, that your Souldiers shall expect the like usage from me.

3. And these things being performed, I shall preserve and set at liberty, all Women, Children, and such other persons as have not bin in armes against us.

4. And all these to be performed by you in one houre, or else present advertisement within one quarter of an houre, after the delivery of these Articles.

PHILIP SKIPTON.

Upon these terms the garrison surrendered, and about two o'clock in the afternoon the besiegers entered the house, which was given up to them to be plundered. The next day, which happened to be Christmas-day, both the temporary huts in which Skippon's army had sheltered, and Grafton House, were burnt to the ground, and the victorious army, thoroughly weary notwithstanding their success, returned to their quarters at Newport, bringing with them their prisoners, whom they soon afterwards forwarded to London.

(To be continued.)